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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, October 20, 1931

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(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "House and Garden Jobs for October." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry and the Bureau of Public Roads.

Bulletins available: "Construction of Chimneys and Fireplaces," mimeographed leaflet, "House Plants," and "Farm Plumbing."

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"I think I'll stay outdoors this morning," I told Cousin Susan. "It's so nice just to sit here on the steps in the sunshine and enjoy the last of my garden."

"But," said Cousin Susan, "the summer clothing ought to be put away today. And weren't you going to superintend Ebenezer while he cleaned the chimney flue? And what's more--"

"I know. What's more I have a radio talk to prepare."

"Yes," said Cousin Susan, "and it seems to me rather late to be just starting on it. What is the subject, anyway?"

"I haven't decided yet. But I think if I sit out here by myself I may have an inspiration."

Cousin Susan sighed.

"Well," said she, "I suppose even relatives have to be queer sometimes. You always were an odd one, Sammy. But I guess there's an odd streak in most families and it has to come out somewhere. Of course, I don't want to interfere with your plans, but I can't for the life of me imagine writing a radio talk out here on the back stoop when you have a desk inside where you can write properly."

After Cousin Susan went in, I began to think about the few choice dahlias and gladiolus that my little garden boasts.

According to W.R.H., our garden advisor, gladiolus bulbs should be dug before the ground freezes in the fall. And curing will be facilitated if the leaf blades have already ripened. After digging, he says, the bulbs should be laid in an open sunny place for several days and allowed to dry thoroughly before being taken indoors. When the leaves are dry and brittle, they may be twisted from the bulbs. Store the bulbs in a cool, dry place where the temper-



ature will not drop below freezing. A far corner of the attic is usually a good place. And shallow baskets or wire frames are good holders because free circulation of air around the bulbs keeps them in the best condition. My grandmother, however, uscd to keep her bulbs in paper bags suspended from the ceiling to be out of danger of hungry mice who were likely to nibble on them during the winter.

As for dahlia roots, they should be dug after the first killing frost. Cut off the stalks 3 or 4 inches above the surface of the ground and dig the roots with great care. Then turn them upside down in order to let the sap drain from the stalks. To dry the tubers, place them in the sun for several hours. Then store them in a dry, frost-proof place. Many gardeners prefer to pack the tubers in shallow trays or boxes filled with sand or soil in order to prevent them from drying out too much and shriveling. Peat moss is also an excellent material for this purpose.

A housekeeper up in Michigan asks for a bulletin on house plants. We have no bulletin on this subject, but we have a helpful mimeographed leaflet. I've sent a copy to this lady and shall be glad to send others to anyone else interested in the care and training of houseplants. The leaflet contains directions for looking after different kinds of plants. It discusses special difficulties in growing them, such as diseases and parasites. And it tells what remedies to use for different conditions. Yes, Arabella, if you just send a postcard with your address asking for the leaflet on houseplants, you shall have it just as fast as we can get it in the mail.

Let's see now. What question was I going to answer next? Oh, yes. About cleaning the chimney. Several people have asked recently how to clean and repairing the chimney flue. I'm glad to know that these writers intend to have their chimneys all ready for the first chilly night when the family wants to sit around a bright fire in the hearth.

Uncle Ebenezer goes at a chimney according to the method suggested in the bulletin on chimneys and fireplaces. Did I ever mention that bulletin before? I think not. It is called "Construction of Chimneys and Fireplaces" And it's number is Sixteen forty-nine, in case you want to order it by number. You would be surprised how many things there are to stop up a chimney--broken tile leaning inward may cause trouble. So may accumulations of mortar, loose bricks, birds' nests, partly burned paper, soot from soft coal, tarry deposits from burning green resinous wood, and so on. A good way to discover what is stopping the flue up is to hold a hand mirror at the proper angle at the base of the chimney and look in to see what is reflected from above.

Uncle Ebenezer cleans the chimney with that old-fashioned device -- a weighted bag of hay or straw attached to the end of the rope. He lets it down from the top of the chimney and then passes it up and down the flue to clean it.

Speaking of hearthfires and other means of household cheer in winter, my Next Door Neighbor declares that there is nothing which adds such cheer to the dark cold days as a pot of gay daffodils in the winter. So when she sends in her order for bulbs, she always plans for a few extras for winter forcing.

Narcissus and hyacinths are particularly good for forcing and tulips may also be brought to flower indoors, if they are given the proper conditions.

The paper-white narcissus, and the Chinese sacred narcissus, may be grown either in pebbles and water, in prepared fiber, pure sand, or in ordinary soil. The trumpet varieties of narcissus and all the tulips and hyacinths should be grown in pots filled with a good soil mixture--that is, about 2 parts of loam, 1 part of sand, and 1 part leaf mold. Good drainage should be provided and the tip of the bulb should be from one to two inches below the surface of the soil.

After the bulbs have been potted, put them in a cool, dark place and water them occasionally in order that their root systems may become well established before the leaf growth begins. When they are grown in pebbles and water the bowls may be placed in a dark corner of the cellar or attic. When grown in soil, bury the pots either in a cold frame or out of doors. A six-inch layer of coal ashes or soil is sufficient for a covering. The time required for storage varies considerably, according to the variety. Paper white narcissus requires six weeks, hyacinths 12 weeks, trumpet narcissus 12 weeks, early tulips 12 weeks, late tulips 14 weeks.

When the bulbs are first brought from storage, place them in a cool, semi-dark place and bring them gradually into full light. While they are growing in a sunny window, turn the pots frequently in order that the foliage and flowers may develop evenly.

Somebody else asks about another fall job--getting the plumbing ready for winter and making all pipes safe from frost. Small water supply pipes freeze quicker than waste pipes and sewers which carry water more or less warmed. Those small pipes should, of course, be put in the soil below the point which the frost reaches. That point differs in different parts of the country. For example, in Alabama pipes need only be laid one and a half to two feet in the ground, but up in Wisconsin, they should go down five to seven feet.

At spots that are likely to be caught by frost, pipes may be boxed and surrounded with dry shavings or excelsior, sawdust, cork, leaves, chopped straw or charcoal. Within the house it is more convenient to use a commercial covering of wool felt or hair felt lined with tar paper. A good homemade covering is tar paper lining with a wrapping of felt, and the whole jacketed with canvas pasted or wired on and finished with good waterproof paint. Old automobile tires cut in long narrow strips and wound spirally around the pipe are useful.

Is there a bulletin on home plumbing that gives details about looking after pipes and faucets and bathtubs and such? Dear me, yes. There are two of them, both useful for the handy man or handy woman around the house. But I'm really embarrassed to mention still another bulletin today. The two, however, that may help you prevent plumbing troubles are "Simple Plumbing Repairs" and "Farm Plumbing."

Tomorrow: "Feeding the Younger Generation."

